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## IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims in the application as follows:

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1.    (Currently Amended) A method for learning consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior, said method

comprising the steps of:

generating a hierarchical representation of relationships formed between ~~a~~ an online

merchant and a plurality of online parties, said representation based on referrals to said merchant

of certain of said parties by other of said parties;

obtaining data relating to online transactions between said parties and said merchant;

processing said data; and

predicting consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior of a target party based on selected data relating

to at least one party on a lower level in said hierarchical representation than said target party,

said selected data selected from ~~said~~ the processed data.


2.    (Original)The method of claim 1, wherein said representation comprises a tree structure

of hierarchically arranged nodes corresponding to said parties.


3.    (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein each party represented by a child

node in said tree structure ~~was~~ is referred to said merchant by the party represented by a

respective parent node in said tree structure.


4.    (Original) The method of claim 3, comprising the further step of providing compensation

to each ancestor of a party that performs a transaction with said merchant.


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5.      (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein said compensation comprises a

share of the profit generated by said transaction.

6.      (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said selected data comprises data

relating to ~~one or more of the group consisting of~~ at least one of:

 demographics of said at least one party;

 acquaintances of said at least one party;

 past transactions of said at least one party; and

 clickstream patterns of said at least one party.

7.      (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said online transactions comprise

redemption of a sales promotional tool selected from the group of sales promotional tools

~~consisting of~~ comprising any of:

 discount coupons valid for all items offered by said merchant;

 discount coupons valid for a selected group of items offered by said merchant;

 discount coupons valid for a particular item offered by said merchant;

 gift certificates; and

 freebies.

8.      (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said processing step comprises

applying ~~one or more techniques selected from the group of techniques consisting of~~ at least one

technique comprising any of:

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correlation analysis;

collaborative filtering; and

associative learning.


9.      (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, comprising ~~one or more further steps selected from the group of steps consisting of~~ any of:

determining pricing for items offered by said merchant;

performing market segmentation of said parties;

identifying preferences of said target party;

identifying sales promotional tools relevant to said target party;

performing marketing targeted at an identified market segment;

performing marketing targeted at said target party; and

~~maximising~~ maximizing the potential success of a promotional tool.


10.     (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, comprising the further step of ~~incentivizing~~ providing incentives to said parties to form said relationships.


11.     (Currently Amended) A method for learning consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior, said method comprising the steps of:

offering a shared business opportunity with ~~a~~ an online merchant to selected online parties;

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enabling parent parties that have accepted said shared business opportunity to offer a shared business opportunity to selected child parties;

compensating each ancestor of one of said selected child parties in response to an online transaction between said child party and said merchant; and

predicting consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior of a target party based on consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior of at least one descendant party of said target party.

12.     (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of ~~incentivizing~~ providing incentive to said parties to accept said shared business opportunity.

13.     (Currently Amended) A system for learning consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior, said system comprising:

at least one communications interface operable for transmitting and receiving data;

a memory unit operable for storing data and instructions to be performed by a processing unit; and

a processing unit coupled to said at least one communications interface and said memory unit, said processing unit programmed to:

generate a hierarchical representation of relationships formed between an online merchant and a plurality of parties, said representation indicative of referrals to said merchant of certain of said parties by other of said parties;

obtain data relating to online transactions between said parties and said merchant;

process said data; and

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predict consumer ~~behaviour~~ <u>behavior</u> of a target party based on selected data relating to at least one party on a lower level in said hierarchical representation than said target party, said selected data selected from ~~said~~ <u>the</u> processed data.

14.    (Original) The system of claim 13, wherein said representation comprises a tree structure of hierarchically arranged nodes corresponding to said parties.

15.    (Currently Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein each party represented by a child node in said tree structure ~~was~~ <u>is</u> referred to said merchant by the party represented by a respective parent node in said tree structure.

16.    (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein said processing unit is further programmed to determine a compensation for each ancestor of a party that performs a transaction with said merchant.

17.    (Currently Amended) The system of claim 16, wherein said compensation comprises a share of ~~the~~ profit generated by said transaction.

18.    (Currently Amended) The system of claim 13, ~~wherein said selected data comprises data relating to~~ <u>at least one of</u>:

demographics of said at least one party;

acquaintances of said at least one party;

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past transactions of said at least one party; and

clickstream patterns of said at least one party.

19.     (Currently Amended) The system of claim 13, wherein said online transactions comprise

redemption of a sales promotional tool selected from the group of sales promotional tools

~~consisting of~~ comprising any of:

discount coupons valid for all items offered by said merchant;

discount coupons valid for a selected group of items offered by said merchant;

discount coupons valid for a particular item offered by said merchant;

gift certificates; and

freebies.

20.     (Currently Amended) The system of claim 13, wherein said ~~processing unit is~~

~~programmed to process said data by applying one of more techniques selected from the group of~~

~~techniques consisting of~~ online transactions comprise redemption of a sales promotional tool

selected from sales promotional tools comprising of:

correlation analysis;

collaborative filtering; and

associative learning.

21.     (Currently Amended) The system of claim 13, ~~wherein said processing unit is~~

~~programmed to execute one or more tasks of the group of tasks consisting of~~ comprising any of:

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    determine pricing for items offered by said merchant;

    perform market segmentation of said parties;

    identify preferences of said target party;

    identify sales promotional tools relevant to said target party;

    perform marketing targeted at an identified market segment;

    perform marketing targeted at said target party; and

    ~~maximise~~ maximize the potential success of a promotional tool.


22.    (Original) The system of claim 13, wherein said processing unit is further programmed to offer an incentive to said parties to form said relationships.


23.    (Currently Amended) A system for learning consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior, comprising:

    at least one communications interface operable for transmitting and receiving data;

    a memory unit operable for storing data and instructions to be performed by a processing unit; and

    a processing unit coupled to said at least one communications interface and said memory unit, said processing unit programmed to:

        offer a shared business opportunity with ~~a~~ an online merchant to selected online parties;

        enable parent parties that have accepted said shared business opportunity to offer a shared business opportunity to selected child parties;

        compensate each ancestor of one of said selected child parties in response to an online transaction between said child party and said merchant; and

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predict consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior of a target party based on consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior of at least one descendant party of said target party.

24.    (Original) The system of claim 23, wherein said processing unit is further programmed to offer an incentive to said parties to accept said shared business opportunity.

25.    (Currently Amended) A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium comprising a computer program recorded therein for learning consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior, said computer program product comprising:

computer program code means for generating a hierarchical representation of relationships formed between ~~a~~ an online merchant and a plurality of online parties, said representation based on referrals to said merchant of certain of said parties by other of said parties;

computer program code means for obtaining data relating to online transactions between said parties and said merchant;

computer program code means for processing said data; and

computer program code means for predicting consumer ~~behaviour~~ behavior of a target party based on selected data relating to at least one party on a lower level in said hierarchical representation than said target party, said selected data selected from ~~said~~ the processed data.

26.    (Original) The computer program product of claim 25, wherein said representation comprises a tree structure of hierarchically arranged nodes corresponding to said parties.

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27.    (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 26, wherein each party represented by a child node in said tree structure ~~was~~ is referred to said merchant by the party represented by a respective parent node in said tree structure.

28.    (Original) The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising computer program code means for determining compensation for each ancestor of a party that performs a transaction with said merchant.

29.    (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 28, wherein said compensation comprises a share of ~~the~~ profit generated by said transaction.

30.    (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 25, wherein said selected data comprises data relating to ~~one or more of the group consisting of~~ at least one of: demographics of said at least one party;

        acquaintances of said at least one party;

        past transactions of said at least one party; and

        clickstream patterns of said at least one party.

31.    (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 25, wherein said online transactions comprise redemption of a sales promotional tool selected from ~~the group of sales~~ promotional tools ~~consisting of~~ comprising one of:

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discount coupons valid for all items offered by said merchant;

discount coupons valid for a selected group of items offered by said merchant;

discount coupons valid for a particular item offered by said merchant;

gift certificates; and

freebies.


32.    (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 25, ~~further comprising one or more computer program code means selected from the group of computer program code means consisting of~~ wherein said processing step comprises applying at least one technique comprising any of:

computer program code means for correlation analysis;

computer program code means for collaborative filtering; and

computer program code means for associative learning.


33.    (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 25, ~~further comprising one or more computer program code means selected from the group of computer program code means consisting of~~ comprising any of:

computer program code means for determining pricing for items offered by said

merchant;

computer program code means for performing market segmentation of said parties;

computer program code means for identifying preferences of said target party;

computer program code means for identifying sales promotional tools relevant to said

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target party;

computer program code means for performing marketing targeted at an identified market segment;

computer program code means for performing marketing targeted at said target party; and

computer program code means for ~~maximising~~ <u>maximizing</u> the potential success of a promotional tool.

34.     (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 25, further comprising computer program code means for ~~incentivizing~~ <u>providing incentives to</u> said parties to form said relationships.

35.     (Currently Amended) A computer program product comprising a computer readable medium comprising a computer program recorded therein for learning consumer ~~behaviour~~ <u>behavior</u>, said computer program product comprising:

computer program code means for offering a shared business opportunity with a<u>n</u> <u>online</u> merchant to selected <u>online</u> parties;

computer program code means for enabling parent parties that have accepted said shared business opportunity to offer a shared business opportunity to selected child parties;

computer program code means for compensating each ancestor of one of said selected child parties in response to an online transaction between said child party and said merchant; and

computer program code means for predicting consumer ~~behaviour~~ <u>behavior</u> of a target party based on consumer ~~behaviour~~ <u>behavior</u> of at least one descendant party of said target party.

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36.     (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 35, further comprising computer program code means for ~~incentivizing~~ <u>providing incentives to</u> said parties to accept said shared business opportunity.

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